

## TV Review: Star-Powered, Clever Season Premiere of ‘Harry’s Law’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 21, 2011 - 2:14pm

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CHICAGO – I had serious issues with the series premiere of NBC’s “Harry’s Law” earlier this year and some of those problems remain with the second-season premiere but there’s a reason that the first line of tonight’s episode is “*Good morning, Harry — Our new beginning.*” With a pair of mega-talented guest stars plus two great new permanent additions, “Harry’s Law” is significantly improved in season two. Everyone is going to be watching “The X Factor” tonight but those that stray to NBC should be pleasantly surprised by the first episode of this clever multi-part storyline.



TV Rating: **3.5/5.0**

After a surprisingly strong initial showing in the ratings, the Kathy Bates legal vehicle slowly eroded over the first short season and barely survived the round of cancellations at the Peacock Network. An Emmy nomination for the mega-talented Bates (who looks SO much more comfortable here than she did at the beginning of the program) helped promote the program and it now feels like this could be a modest hit on Wednesday nights (as modest as can be expected opposite juggernauts like “The X Factor” and “Modern Family”). It certainly feels like less of an afterthought for David E. Kelley and has developed that smart & sassy vibe that has clicked in the past for the creator of shows like “The Practice” and “Boston Legal.” “Harry’s Law” isn’t there yet but it’s shockingly headed in that direction.



Harry's Law

Photo credit: NBC

It helps to cast two amazing supporting actors in guest star roles for the first two episodes — Alfred Molina & Jean Smart. The man who played Doc Ock (and was recently seen in the now-canceled "Law & Order: Los Angeles") stars as Eric Sanders, a notorious defendant charged with bludgeoning his wife in the bathroom. He has two major strikes against him. First, he kept a diary/journal in which he wrote elaborate fantasies about the exact act he's accused of carrying out. Second, he doesn't fully remember the evening, having taken a sleeping pill that evening.



Harry's Law  
Photo credit: NBC

Harry (Bates) gets the case just as it's about to go to trial and runs head-first into the equally-aggressive Rosanna (Smart) on the opposite side of the courtroom. As these two alpha females bicker, the multi-episode arc actually raises some interesting questions — Should a man's diary be considered evidence? Is it an honest reflection of his mental state or intention? And when Harry gets the case her client has been in confinement for months and is starting to crack. When bail is denied and the associated mental pressure weighs on a man, can he possibly be in a state where he can testify on his own behalf?

Not only is the case one of more interesting legal battles of the year to date but the "new look" of "Harry's Law" is effective. Fans of the first season of the program and its quirky nature may think that this version looks a bit too much like "The Practice," but I prefer the realism of this incarnation over the oddities of the last one. I think Kathy Bates does as well. She seems reinvigorated by the relaunch, more into her character than ever by virtue of being allowed to play a more serious dramatic edge. It helps to have stellar people like Molina and Smart to play off. Scenes between Bates & Molina and Bates & Smart are reason alone to watch the first few episodes of the new season.

And a few solid supporting actors will remain after the Smart & Molina case is over. Most prominently, Mark Valley of "Boston Legal" and "Human Target" joins the team as Oliver Richard, one of the attorneys who fired Harriet in the first season that can now see her value. The other major new addition is the associate Cassie Reynolds played by Karen Olivo. She makes an instant impression with an interesting subplot case involving an artist who wants his painting back after he hears that it's been altered. Do we have rights to our creative property after it's been sold? Brittany Snow will be departing the show but appears in the first few episodes. Finally, Christopher McDonald is effective as an over-the-hill hotshot realizing that he may not be that hot any more and Nate Corddry returns, looking more comfortable than he did in the series premiere.

I'm not about to argue that "Harry's Law" is one of the best shows on TV but I can tell you that it's crisper, smarter, faster, and more entertaining that it was when it first premiered. If they continue this trajectory, it's going to be pretty amazing about a year from now.

*"Harry's Law" stars Kathy Bates, Mark Valley, Karen Olivo, Nate Corddry, and Christopher McDonald. Alfred Molina and Jean Smart guest star in the season premiere. It was created by David E. Kelley. The second season premieres on Wednesday, September 21st, 2011 at 8pm CST.*



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